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ABSTRACT

In fall 2002, three large traditional high schools in Chicago, Illinois, started a conversion process that opened five new small schools. In partnership with Mills College, the Consortium on Chicago School Research designed a short-term, interview-based study to provide a snapshot of these new small schools in their first year of planning and implementation. Principals or directors were interviewed at the five small schools, and principals were interviewed in the three host schools. Three program staff members and 50% of the teachers were interviewed, and focus groups were held with groups of 5 to 10 students. Question and answer sessions were held with parents at two small schools. Findings show that the level of student-teacher personalism increased, and teacher professional community was strengthened in at least four of the small schools. Small school staff members reported that the focus on instruction was limited in year one, and participants reported implementation challenges. The current and future relationships between small schools and the host school were not clearly defined, but overall there was a sense of optimism and commitment for the next year. (SLD)

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Chicago High School Redesign Initiative: A Snapshot of the First Year of Implementation

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August 2003

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Consortium on Chicago School Research

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Consortium on Chicago School Research

August 11, 2003

Pat Ford, Director
Chicago High School Redesign Initiative
Chicago Community Trust
111 East Wacker Drive
Suite 1400
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Pat:

Enclosed is a brief report, *Chicago High School Redesign Initiative: A Snapshot of the First Year of Implementation.* In partnership with Joe Kahne, we conducted this evaluation study in order to document implementation issues related to the inaugural year of the Redesign Initiative in Chicago Public Schools. As such, this is a purely descriptive overview and summary of selected experiences of teachers, students, and administrators in these converting schools.

I hope that you find this helpful as the program expands in the coming years. From our perspective, this has been very rewarding in giving us a head start and helping us to prepare for the larger research study that we will be conducting for the next three years. It has also helped us to identify gaps in our current plans and suggested some strategies that may help to fill those gaps.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

John Q. Easton

John Q. Easton
Executive Director

Chicago High School Redesign Initiative:
A Snapshot of the First Year of Implementation

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In the fall of 2002, three large traditional high schools started a conversion process that opened five new small schools:

- Bowen High School opened *Chicago Discovery Academy* and *BEST* (Bowen Environmental Studies Team).
- Orr High School opened *Phoenix Academy.*
- South Shore opened *School of the Arts* and *School of Entrepreneurship.*

Purpose

In partnership with Mills College, the Consortium on Chicago School Research designed a short-term, interview-based study to provide a snapshot of these new small schools during their first year of planning and implementation. The interviews with principals, teachers, students, and other stakeholders are summarized and quoted in this report and are followed by a series of questions that will inform future small school studies.

Data and Analysis

- Principals/Directors were interviewed at the five small schools.
- Principals were interviewed at the three host schools.
- Three program staff members were interviewed in two small schools.
- Focus groups with teachers were held at five small schools; overall, we met with 50 percent of the total teaching staff.
- Focus groups with students were held at five small schools; five to 10 students attended per group.
- Question and Answer sessions were held during parent meetings in two small schools.
- Interviews were transcribed and data were compiled into categories.

Organization of Findings

The findings of this descriptive study are organized thematically. The categories that we use here correspond to themes that are prevalent in the small school, school start-up, and school conversion research literatures. Specifically, we report on three goals of the reform: student-teacher personalism, professional community among teachers, and emphasis on curriculum and instruction. Then we discuss three sets of factors that may enable or constrain the development of strong small schools: the bureaucratic challenges of implementation, the relationships between small schools and their hosts, and staff and student optimism and commitment to the reform.

1. **The level of student-teacher personalism increased:**

   - Teachers, students, principals, and parents reported a strong sense of personalism, one of the oft-cited advantages of small schools.

2. **Teacher professional community was strengthened in at least four of the five small schools:**

   - More faculty members participated in decision making (e.g. hiring, budget).
   - Teachers collaborated on student performance and instruction.
   - Teachers felt a renewed sense of commitment to the school and reported increased energy and enthusiasm for teaching.

3. **Small school staff members reported that the focus on instruction was limited in year one.**

   - Although all of the schools emphasized instructional improvement in their proposals, other disruptions hindered the focus on instruction. Principals and staff agree that instruction needs much more emphasis in year two.
   - However, teachers and administrators spoke highly of the professional development and other opportunities provided by the Chicago High

School Redesign Initiative (the Initiative), the Office of Small Schools and other external partners.

4. **Participants reported implementation challenges:**

   A. Planning

   - Neither adequate time nor resources were allocated for planning.
   - Similarly, leaders wanted release time for planning.

   B. Operations

   - Teachers and principals were frustrated by inadequate facilities infrastructure such as furniture, office space, telephones, and e-mail. In addition, they reported inadequate materials, books, and equipment for instruction.
   - Discretionary money was not distributed in a timely manner, and some schools reported being understaffed all year.

   C. Small School Autonomy

   - Small school participants felt encouraged to be creative and innovative in terms of leadership and instruction, and then reported tension when "the system" would not accommodate their ideas.
   - There was also tension between the small schools and the host schools about how to share authority, staff, students, space, and resources.

5. **The current and future relationships between the small schools and with the host school were not clearly defined.**

   - Students and teachers reported some negative relationships with others in the same building. They also reported that sharing of space and resources had often been a challenge.
   - Teachers and principals in the host schools faced an uncertain future.
   - Student recruitment raised questions about enrollment, equity, and student choice in the small schools as well as concern about educational opportunities for those students remaining in the host school.

6. **There is a sense of optimism and commitment for next year:**

   - Despite the challenges listed above, participants are moving forward. They are motivated by and learning from this year's experience.

Questions for Further Discussion

- What can CPS and the Initiative do to ensure that small schools create desirable change related to teaching and learning?
- How can CPS and the Initiative provide more support for planning? How can they reduce the challenges associated with securing appropriate facilities and infrastructure?
- How can authority and oversight between the district and the small schools be aligned? What forms of autonomy (e.g. curricular focus, scheduling, teacher evaluations) should small schools receive and how should those be secured and monitored?
- How can tension about student and teacher recruitment, staffing, space, authority, and resources be managed to benefit all involved?

Setting the Context

The three converting host schools, Bowen, Orr, and South Shore, are among the lowest performing schools in Chicago. In fact, all three schools were placed on intervention due to their low performance.

TABLE 1: HOST SCHOOL STATISTICS PRIOR TO CONVERSION, 2001-2002

School	Number of Students	Ethnicity		11th Grade Students Taking the PSAE*	Percent Meeting or Exceeding PSAE Standards		Percent Low Income	Percent SPED*
		Af. Am.	Latino		Reading	Math		
Bowen	1012	59.4%	40.3%	173	19.0%	10.0%	88.7%	22.9%
South Shore	1232	100.0%		184	9.0%	2.0%	87.1%	26.0%
Orr	1243	85.8%	13.8%	98	14.0%	8.0%	76.7%	25.7%

* Please note: All data are taken from the state school report cards except for the SPED proportion and the PSAE percent information, which were calculated from CPS student records. For further statistics see Tables 2 and 3 on page 21.

As the table above shows, in the year before conversion began;

- The converting school's students are largely African-American and Latino.
- Few students take the PSAE in these schools and of those who do, test performance is extremely low.
- The converting schools are composed of a large proportion of low-income students.
- The percentage of students receiving special education (SPED) services is high.

The lives of the host schools' students are further complicated by the conditions of poverty in their communities. Students and teachers report challenges that include the daily presence of gangs and violence, the lack of adequate social services, and

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other disruptions to the school day. In addition, small schools faced the pressure of relating to each other and to their host school.

- We heard that there was a "push to get off intervention . . . and a pull because of the money."
- Some principals were uncertain about their roles and authority within the conversion process.
- Many teachers were afraid that jobs would be lost if they did not participate in the small schools. They were concerned for themselves and for other staff.
- Students and teachers within the small school sensed jealousy and disregard from their peers in the host school.
- As the three host schools remained on probation, the small school initiative and its associated supports were nevertheless seen as providing an opportunity for positive change.

Findings

1. Personalism between teachers and students: "Small school students get more attention."

- **Conversation between teachers has led to deeper relationships with their students.**

"The kids get to know the teachers really well because we have a small school. . . . There's a lot of interaction, we can remediate a lot of problems. If I hear about a kid that's doing something, then the other teachers are all going to hear about it and we can sit and try and come up with some intervention to help that kid whether it's academic, social, whatever it is."—*Teacher*

"We get together and we know how to follow one student. The good thing about small schools is that you can get together with a small staff and find out if anybody else is having the same problem. And you can brainstorm about how to motivate this child to do better across the board."—*Teacher*

And the kids are like—they felt like, "What do you mean teachers talk?" Because they're not used to it, right?"—*Teacher*

- **Students know their teachers well and value the relationships and support that they receive.**

"Teachers don't pay attention to students at a large high school. Small school students get more attention. At a larger school, teachers will ignore academic questions to deal with discipline problems."—*Student*

"All teachers know students by name. [At previous school], maybe you're known by last name or because of your seat in class."—*Student*

"Everybody knows your name. . . . And I guess I could say that your teachers, by them knowing your name, they know certain problems you may have. And a certain subject or something, maybe they can pull you to the side one-on-one."—*Student*

"I would say great. We have relationships with our teachers. They understand us and they help us with everything that we need to be helped with."—*Student*

"At the beginning of the year our kids were very, very hostile, very negative, and hopeless. . . . And I think one thing with the small schools is that you are able to

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restore the fact that you can encourage them on a very personal way that you could not have gotten in a big school setting."—*Teacher*

- **Parents are generally supportive of small schools and value the personal environment that their children are part of.**

"Another teacher caught one of my kids going home before school started. Instead of coming to school he was going in the opposite direction. So we let his mother know. She left work, went home, and brought him. She did say, 'If that wouldn't have happened I would never have known. . . . You guys took the time.' She was very appreciative of that." —*Teacher*

"The teachers are nurturing, they definitely know the kids' names and pretty much what's going on with them. . . . They are more involved and more interactive with the children, trying to get them active. This school had a negative aura, and this is turning it around." —*Parent*

2. Professional Community: "We fight like brothers and sisters, we act like brothers and sisters"

- **The teachers-as-leaders concept is growing in at least four out of five small schools.**

"So, I would say, without qualification, that every single one of our teachers loves the fact that they participate in the governance of the school, and there is shared decision making. Teachers get to decide how the budget will be spent, they get to decide who's going to be hired, they get to decide all the important issues involving the school. Now, the role of the principal is to support them and also to lead them and to follow them."—*Principal*

"The day we went out for our winter retreat, we decided not to have an outside facilitator but to build a capacity within our school. People were able to present different workshops on stuff and so it was wonderful. It was great. It was basically to build confidence and trust between staff. We also had the opportunity to do some integrated units at this time, and it worked wonderfully."—*Principal*

"For example, about hiring decisions . . . let's say a couple of people have very strong feelings against a person, then we'll just [keep looking] because everybody needs to work with those people."—*Teacher*

"Being around the team and working together with the administration, being part of the budgeting and part of the interviewing . . . just being part of all that is just new to me, and it is rewarding. It's had its ups and downs, but it's been rewarding." —*Teacher*

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"[This whole year] hasn't been a pleasant experience. I mean at least somebody had one, but hasn't been a pleasant experience for me. It's been an exercise in frustration."—*Teacher*

"We were told that this would be where teachers were empowered and we would have autonomy from what was going on over there. So, not only is this a small school, this is a small school where teachers have some sort of say in how it's run, how it's developed, where it's going. That was more lip service than anything."—*Teacher*

- **Teachers enjoy working together.**

"We have a lot of meetings. There's no bad feeling about the frequency and there really is an openness. There's a niceness here that I haven't seen."—*Teacher*

"I think one of the things that is happening is that we have more contact between us in comparison with the [Host] school. We meet everyday almost, we see each other all the time. I think that helps a lot."—*Teacher*

- **Teachers noticed a sense of energy and increased commitment.**

"Last year I must have used 10 sick days. . . . I took one sick day this year."—*Teacher*

"We had two teachers who were going to retire and nobody's leaving because they want to stay . . . and that says a lot right there."—*Principal*

"Another thing is the excitement and enthusiasm of the teachers. We were here in Ms. Goodteacher's class, and she was showing us some students' work. And she was so excited about that, that I got all pumped up. And then another teacher walked in and said, 'Well wait till you see what my kids did.' And it's contagious. The energy is different here."—*Teacher*

3. Curriculum and Instruction: "I think we're going to do more as an entire school . . . to promote best practice"

- **All small schools have curricular themes. They have restructured their school day to accommodate thematic activities and electives.**
  - All schools have block schedules.
  - Most schools have early release days.

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- All schools have special activities for their students such as field trips, internships, workshops, and service learning.

- **Teachers report that the implementation process has hindered instructional innovation.**

"Things are just so fast, and there are so many pieces of the puzzle that have to be put into place that we take care of the most important stuff as it comes up. But very often we lose sight of the things that really need attention."—*Teacher*

"I didn't have the chance to do hands-on learning—we didn't have the equipment."—*Teacher*

"And the curriculum stuff that didn't get dealt with [in the summer], there was just no more time to devote to it once we were up [and running]."—*Teacher*

- **To the extent that there have been instructional changes, they have centered around incorporating out-of-school experiences into the curriculum and promoting interdisciplinary projects.**

  - Principals, teachers, parents and students were enthusiastic about their experiences outside the classroom.

"We go out into the city once a week and we tie it in with our curriculum. So, we've gone to the [unclear] Museum for science, we've gone to the Planetarium, we've gone on a walking architectural tour, we've gone on an [architectural] cruise tour, we've gone to the Museum of Science and Industry to look at the great train exhibit. [We] tie that in with history. The All City Arts exhibit . . . was tied in with our art school. So every one of our field trips, there's a curriculum that's tied into the classroom." —*Principal*

"I get to see the kids that typically don't leave their two block radius get to go out . . . and see something different that they were never exposed to, just on a bus going somewhere, looking out the window"—*Teacher*

"It's innovative and allows kids exposure they wouldn't get in a regular school. Other schools take class trips to Great America—our kids went to Springfield to learn about politics." —*Parent*

"We have internship opportunities. Most high schools don't get to do that. And then we write about it each week in our journals"—*Student*

"[Service learning] is like you do something for the community. You reach out and DO something instead of being in the classroom . . . [Instead of] always

writing in books and reading you should go out and do something, really SEE your work. See how you're improving or how you're not improving."—*Student*

- **Principals, teachers, and students describe initial steps to integrate subject matter.**

  "We actually have one common class between freshmen and junior teachers, and that's first period algebra. . . . And that's giving birth to another cooperative team teaching theme for next year—our American studies class, which we will have on the sophomore team, would be U.S. History and American literature and linking those classes as one."—*Principal*

  "All of the teachers really connect with each other. If one's doing an assignment, they help each other. We [the students] all concentrate on the same subject in every class, writing about the same subject."—*Student*

  "We definitely have a lot of projects to do. Being [a student] at Host High, I had [one] end of the year project or something. Now it's all about doing these major projects."—*Student*

  "Our commitment is to make sure that every class they take integrates arts infused with the class, as a learning strategy, as a tool to get them to advance their academic achievement. So we have to do workshops to make sure parents understand that."—*Principal*

- **Many principals and teachers want to work on curriculum and instruction next year.**

  "I would like to keep nudging the teachers to do more and more interesting things in their classrooms. But, I know that I can't push them that hard. So, I guess getting teachers to do all kinds of cool things in the classroom involving engaged learning, technology, interdisciplinary work. I would like to see more of that happen."
  —*Principal*

  "Then [we want] to continue professional development and really get into the classroom, start our teachers team teaching more and collaborating more . . ."
  —*Principal*

  "We have ideas of what we want the curriculum and the instruction to look like next year, and so we're going to spend some time with actually doing that during the summer."—*Teacher*

- **Small schools appreciate the professional development that they have received from the Initiative, CPS, and external partners.**

"The Initiative has been very good about providing professional development for us. We've worked with Life Long Learning, and they've done some workshops with us throughout the year. The Initiative is very good at guiding us to professional development as well as providing it for us, which is great because it's really something new for a lot of us. We have an older staff, and [they are] very set in their ways. So, we need professional development to get all the teachers on board with strategies to make us better teachers. We also had worked with Area College, they're our external partner and they provide professional development for us."—*Principal*

"The funder (the Initiative) does maybe once every six weeks or so with Life Long Learning and that's rich, but I can't afford to send two or three teachers. Money is not the issue, we can't have three people out when you have only [a certain number of] people here. So, at best I take maybe about two people with me."—*Principal*

"We've been to New York once to look at their small schools. We've been to Newark, New Jersey to look at their small schools and technology and curriculum. LQE is sponsoring another trip with the small schools in June and I believe Gates is planning something for the summer."—*Principal*

"Our AIO (Area Instructional Officer) has always been very supportive; she's provided a lot of professional development for us through our specialists."— *Principal*

4a. Planning: "We are building as we fly."

- **Small schools wanted more funding and time for planning.**

"In business, people will tell you that they spend 80 percent of their time planning and 20 percent of their time implementing, and in education, seems like we were always doing the opposite."—*Principal*

"April 6th was the announcement and then I had to open three schools in August. Those were the challenges . . . you don't have the time to prepare for new offices, you don't have time to be sure that you have enough money for that. You don't have enough time to be sure that you have all personnel available."—*Principal*

"The Initiative initially said we could have $100,000 for planning, and $500,000 for implementation. But the planning money turned into $20,000 (later increased to $35,000) and planning time was severely truncated. New starts need to be announced the summer before, and you need two people from February on to be freed up to plan." — *External Partner*

"You're asking a lot of the teachers. You're asking them to go in a classroom and teach and then you're also asking them to develop a school. You know that's asking a lot. You

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know they're under a lot of pressure trying to get the school opened, trying to teach class all day."—*Principal*

- **Teachers wished that they had more fully understood the effort involved in starting a small school.**

  "We are building as we fly. Things of concern slipped through cracks."—*Teacher*

  "This year is learning things that need to be done as they happen."—*Teacher*

  "It's almost like they were setting us up for failure."—*Teacher*

- **Principals, especially those at the host schools, found the Small Schools office at CPS to be helpful during the implementation process.**

  "The Office of Small Schools . . . has been tremendously supportive. I mean . . . they went over the call of duty to make sure that we had the things that we need."—*Principal*

  "I couldn't say enough about the support that we get from the Office of Small Schools . . . the Office of High School Development, and the Initiative, and a key list of others."—*Principal*

  "The Office of Small Schools has been extremely supportive in a very small [time] window."—*Principal*

  "The Board of Education is actually built with a lot of players. In order to find your way around, you have to know the players. So the Small School Office, like [staff], have some nuts and bolts meetings every month, which means they organize the players in the Board to come and discuss issues."—*Principal*

4b. Operations: "Everything was so new for me"

- **Having elementary school unit numbers (unit numbers greater than 2000) presented frequent stumbling blocks.**

  "The small schools were all given former elementary school numbers. So, 7123 (all identifying characteristics, including unit numbers and names have been changed for anonymity in this report) had been an elementary school number for Walden Pond Elementary. When students received transfers from their elementary school, it said go to Walden Pond Elementary and I didn't realize that." —*Principal*

  "Because the elementary schools don't generate progress reports, we've had to do them by hand. Our teachers put notebooks together. They came up with a format, everybody sat around for an entire week and hand wrote progress reports." —*Principal*

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"For teachers in Title I schools, we can get Perkins loans paid off over a five-year plan, but that's for high school teachers. They look to make sure I'm . . . from a school that's Title I. They look at the school and they say, 'Well that's a grammar school.' No, it's not a grammar school."—*Teacher*

- **Lack of appropriate space and missing equipment presented a problem for principals, teachers, and students.**

"But, I'm hoping for everything to be in place; an office for myself and my clerks because they've been having to count their money in their laps. It's been a nightmare."—*Principal*

"Our bathrooms aren't ready now (May) and they were supposed to be ready in the fall for the kids."—*Teacher*

"To be honest with you, it just really has not happened. Everything has been a struggle. They gave us our little discretionary money and said, 'Here you go.' Host High School has been neglected for years. We have no science labs; we have one that is sort of decent, the rest of them haven't been touched in 60 years. We have no overheads, no computers; people in all of our classrooms, you'll see there's nothing there. How do you keep up with the rest of the city, in test scores—or in anything else—when your kids are sitting in rooms that . . . you know."—*Principal*

"I mean they just don't get it. We're so busy trying to fight to put glass in the door, just all the things that we shouldn't have to be doing. Unfortunately if we don't, it's not going to be happening. So, we need to get all that in place so we can move on with the rest of the really important stuff."—*Principal*

- **Many schools did not receive appropriate funding on time.**

"Our [discretionary] monies should have been on line for schools July 1st. We didn't get monies on line . . . till November."—*Principal*

"We had trouble with pay issues, getting people paid, and I'm still not there yet. When you go ask for help it just takes forever to get anything accomplished."—*Principal*

- **Some schools lacked the appropriate staff for much of the school-year.**

"We've spent an entire year trying to get security up here."—*Teacher*

"We didn't have the faculty [teachers] we needed to start, and we still don't have the staff we need."—*Teacher*

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4c. Small School Autonomy: "Are [we] autonomous or not?"

- **The small schools believe that they should be innovative, but feel that the Chicago Public School District is structured for the traditional high school. This has resulted in confusion and sometimes conflict.**

  "The system wants to standardize. Are the small schools the same as charter schools or not? Are they autonomous or not? There needs to be a middle ground."—*External Partner*

  "I don't think they know what we are, what they want us to be."—*Teacher*

  "And you have to work within it. If we would have known this, 'You're a small school, but you don't get this privilege, this special privilege. You know you're a regular school' . . . that type of language would have helped, but then I guess then we wouldn't have dreamed the big dreams that we had."—*Principal*

- **Small schools are confused about to which CPS body they should answer or from which CPS body they should receive assistance.**

  "Another frustration has been the system's inability to have lines of authority within its bureaucracy to support small schools. . . . You have an Office of Small Schools, an Office of High School Development and an Area Instructional Officer. The lines of authority are very blurred as to who can tell you what for what."—*Principal*

- **Small schools' designs for curriculum have sometimes conflicted with CPS's instructional goals.**

  "CPS's top two priorities are one: reading and two: math. Instead, changing the culture and climate of the school is our goal."—*External Partner*

  "I think there were a lot of mixed messages too; in fact, there still are. There was a mixed message that new small schools should develop an idealized curriculum of what they'd like to have. Then there was the other side saying, 'No, no you have to meet CPS standards.' We were told for a long time that the current state test would not be our measurement. And so that was very unclear and so that's really hard for teachers."—*Teacher*

- **Goals for distributed leadership have conflicted with current regulations.**

  "One thing that surprised me was the mixed messages we got sometimes from the Office of Small Schools. At one point they wanted to push us to have a principal. And that principal, of course, would be more like a director and the teacher leaders would be

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more like the people who would actually direct the actual future of the school. And when . . . we stepped up a couple of times we've had our hands slapped."—*Teacher*

"The Area Instructional Office team came in and went into one of our classrooms. . . . and when it came time for the debrief, we were out of class and we wanted to come down for the debrief, and we were told 'uh-unh you can't be there'. . . . This is teacher led, and you're not going to tell us what we're not doing right or what we're doing right?"—*Teacher*

5. Relationships Between Small Schools and Their Hosts: "They think that we think we're better"

- **Students and teachers report some negative relationships with other participants in the same building.**

"There are general perceptions among the general faculty that we're 'cherry-picking.'"—*Teacher*

"We're being hurt by the other children who are not part of [us], and they hate our kids. They fight with them in the halls."—*Teacher*

"We would be able to get more done without interruptions from the other school coming over here and screaming in the hall"—*Student*

- **Sharing of space and resources has sometimes been a challenge.**

"Now we have to expand [leadership] vertically to assure success. And that itself . . . is essential because each of the [small school] leaders have a vested interest in what they're doing. They become ferocious fighters for their facility. They become ferocious fighters for supplies."—*Principal*

- **Principals and teachers in the host schools have an uncertain future.**

"The teachers... have to decide first, do they agree with the small school concept. If they do, what small school sort of fits their philosophy about education, and if they don't, if they're not ready for retirement, where are they going to go?—*Principal*

"How do you recruit the same quality teacher?... Who wants to come to work and create an advanced placement program, or whatever innovative program, [in a host] school that's phasing out?"—*Principal*

"Another issue is what happens to those principals of the large schools, and has the Board thought about how they're going to make that work?—*Principal*

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- **Student recruitment issues have raised concern about enrollment, equity, student choice, and educational opportunities for those remaining at the host school.**

"If there are more than 500 [ninth grade] students who want to enter Host High School in the fall, let's say 600 or 700, we couldn't run small schools because that would be more than [125 ninth grade students in each school]."—*Principal*

"It's hard though, because say all the incoming freshmen choose us. Their name doesn't get pulled [to enroll with us], so now they're in that [other small school]. So, the matter of choice somehow gets clouded.—*Principal*

"After we recruited them, got them to sign up, got them excited about our [small] school, and then their feeder school rerouted them to other schools."—*Principal*

"We have created a very homogenous group of children [in the host school] that are under the care of the Department of Children and Family Services, that are in the care of the criminal system, for whatever the reason, that are in need of special education services, that have a lot of type of identified needs such as mental health . . . then [we have] the teachers that are left behind."—*Principal*

"I try and create a lot of opportunities and experience and exposure for those students so they don't feel like they're being left out . . . and charging the faculty members of those students to have high expectations"—*Principal*

6. Looking Toward the Future: "We're not on the cutting edge, but we're moving that way"

- **Despite the challenges of opening a new school, most small school staff are motivated and committed to shaping their small school in the future.**

"Not everyone is going to get a 30 on an ACT. It's not going to be that. Not this year. Now two years from now you come back, and you'll see the 30. Hey, guarantee. Make sure that's on there. But for this year they're going to look at the scoring and they're going to say, 'Well we thought this was a magic bullet'."—*Principal*

"We're starting to take a step back and looking to see . . . there's next year and how can we do this differently, how can we improve upon this."—*Principal*

"I think we are making a difference with our students. We'll see more in the future."
—*Teacher*

"[Growth in leadership capability and getting a sense of direction] are not necessarily tangible, they are not measurable, but they are very important in terms of establishing a foundation of whatever may come in the future."—*Principal*

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"We have been good at acknowledging and addressing problems. Once we catch up to our ideas and reach our potential we will be phenomenal." — *Teacher*

"It's not quite saying that it's happened yet . . . it will take some time." — *Teacher*

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Questions for Further Discussion

- **What can CPS and the Initiative do to ensure that small schools create desirable change in teaching and learning?**

  As expected, many principals and teachers said that the challenges associated with launching small schools constrained their ability to focus on curriculum and instruction. However, we found evidence of a number of positive developments. First, consistent with the rationale for small schools, in at least four of five schools, participating teachers began developing vibrant professional communities. Second, there is evidence of increased student-teacher personalism, associated with a range of desired social outcomes and possible learning gains. Third, participants looked favorably on the Initiative's professional development efforts. Finally, teachers and principals stated that, in general, more "progress" needed to be made and expressed a desire to focus energy in this area next year. Defining the nature of this "progress" was beyond the scope of this project, however, further research should illuminate the effects of different instructional goals and practices on student outcomes.

  Despite these positive developments, the challenges associated with fostering instructional innovation are significant. What can be done to support these small schools' efforts to focus on and improve teaching and learning, especially since these schools' pre-conversion academic performance levels are well below CPS's desired levels.

- **How can CPS and the Initiative provide more support for planning? How can they reduce the challenges associated with securing appropriate facilities and infrastructure?**

  Consistently, principals and teachers stated that they needed additional time and more planning. How can this assistance be secured for new small schools?

  New small schools also struggled to get needed space, furniture, telephones, e-mail, books, instructional materials, and equipment. While many in the small schools were appreciative of the support they received, the clear consensus was that decisive action was necessary so that small schools could move away from nuts-and-bolts troubleshooting and move on to address teaching and learning.

- **How can authority and oversight be aligned between the district and the small schools? What forms of autonomy (e.g. curricular focus, scheduling, teacher evaluations) should small schools receive and how should those be secured?**

A range of issues related to authority and autonomy require attention. Many teachers and principals were not sure to which CPS body they should answer or from which CPS body they should receive assistance. In addition, many had anticipated greater autonomy with respect to leadership, curriculum, and teacher evaluations than they ultimately experienced.

It is not surprising that such issues arise with the introduction of small autonomous schools in a large system that has multiple structures for oversight and authority. Determining the appropriate nature of this autonomy and oversight is not straightforward. However, in order to create a structure through which small autonomous schools can develop, it is important to consider ways to clarify and align both authority and oversight. In addition, it will be important to identify the forms of autonomy (e.g. curricular focus, teacher evaluation, scheduling) that small schools should receive and how that autonomy can be secured. In other words, how should the system integrate autonomy with oversight and systemwide standards?

- **How can tension about student and teacher recruitment, staffing, space, authority, and resources be managed to benefit all involved?**

  As noted in the report, some tension arose among small schools and between small schools and their host school. Some small schools struggled to recruit enough students while others did not. Some worried that certain small schools would recruit the best students. Both jealousy and conflict arose regarding space and resource sharing within the larger building. Additional uncertainty arose surrounding the long-term employment status of host school principals and teachers. Again, these challenges are not surprising. Such tensions are common during periods of transition when schools within schools are created. It is important to consider how to manage tensions between small schools and with host schools related to issues of recruitment, staffing, space, authority, and resources.

Table 2: Additional Host School Statistics Prior to Conversion, 2001-2002

School	Number of Students	Gender*		Grade*				Percent Dropout	Percent Daily Attendance	Percent LEP	Percent Mobility	Percent Graduated
		Male	Female	9th	10th	11th	12th					
Bowen	1012	50.1%	49.9%	365	286	234	169	22.7%	85.5%	7.1%	36.3%	69.00%
South Shore	1232	51.9%	48.1%	458	355	239	190	21.3%	82.5%	0.0%	38.5%	66.50%
Orr	1243	50.1%	49.9%	675	274	186	90	27.2%	79.0%	1.7%	54.4%	58.70%
CPS District												

* Please note: All data are taken from the state school report cards except for the starred categories which were calculated from CPS student records.

Table 3: Small Schools and Host Schools, 2002-2003

School	Number of Students	Grade				Gender		Ethnicity			Percent Meeting or Exceeding State ISAT Standards*		Percent At or Above National ITBS Norms*		Percent SPED
		9th	10th	11th	12th	Male	Female	White	Af. Am.	Hispanic	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	
Phoenix	232	97	81	42	12	78	154	3	179	50					
7310		41.8%	34.9%	18.1%	5.2%	33.6%	66.4%	1.3%	77.2%	21.6%	6.7%	4.1%	21.3%	28.6%	22.0%
Orr	1028	375	331	177	107	533	495	5	851	171					
1830		36.5%	32.2%	17.2%	10.4%	51.8%	48.2%	0.5%	82.8%	16.6%	5.3%	3.9%	25.5%	19.5%	26.3%
Best	66	66	0	0	0	40	26	1	56	9					
7340		100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	60.6%	39.4%	1.5%	84.8%	13.6%	6.8%	7.0%	20.9%	34.9%	27.3%
Discovery	387	99	89	96	103	167	220	2	189	194					
7360		25.6%	23.0%	24.8%	26.6%	43.2%	56.8%	0.5%	48.8%	50.1%	10.9%	16.2%	36.0%	52.9%	14.7%
Bowen	550	111	211	129	99	302	248	4	378	167					
1240		20.2%	38.4%	23.5%	18.0%	54.9%	45.1%	0.7%	68.7%	30.4%	3.0%	4.4%	32.6%	21.5%	25.6%
Arts	261	138	0	123	0	120	141	2	257	1					
7370		52.9%	0.0%	47.1%	0.0%	46.0%	54.0%	0.8%	98.5%	0.4%	8.0%	3.9%	30.9%	24.6%	21.5%
Entrepreneur	250	107	143	0	0	125	125	4	245	1					
7380		42.8%	57.2%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	1.6%	98.0%	0.4%	5.2%	8.4%	29.8%	36.5%	19.6%
South Shore	901	169	337	189	206	500	401	2	897	2					
1550		18.8%	37.4%	21.0%	22.9%	55.5%	44.5%	0.2%	99.6%	0.2%	5.6%	3.9%	33.1%	27.1%	26.3%

Please note: All data is collected from CPS student records and test records. Students currently within one of these high schools with 8th grade test scores are all included in test averages.

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